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Twenty-fifth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 2066 (2012), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) until 30 September 2013 and requested me to keep it regularly informed of the situation on the ground as UNMIL continues its reconfiguration, as well as on progress towards achieving the transition benchmarks and on the development of a transition plan with the Government of Liberia. The present report provides the requested information, as well as an update on major developments since my report of 15 August 2012 (S/2012/641).

II. Major developments

A. Political situation

2. In December, the President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf held a national conference, during which she launched Liberia Vision 2030, a long-term political and economic agenda for the country to realize its economic and social aspirations, covering issues related to a fair political system, security, rule of law and national reconciliation, among others. In conjunction with the launch, the President introduced the National Reconciliation Road Map and the Agenda for Transformation, the successor to the poverty reduction strategy, as instruments to help move the country towards its economic, political and social goals by 2030.

3. The constitutional reform process gathered momentum with the establishment by the President in August of the Constitution Review Committee, which is mandated to guide a nationwide, consultative review of the Constitution of Liberia. The current Constitution concentrates political power in the executive and centralizes State functions in Monrovia. The Committee is chaired by former Chief Justice Counsellor Gloria Musu-Scott and consists of five members from a cross section of religious, political and regional backgrounds. The Committee is expected to propose reforms to the President. The proposals will then be considered by the legislature, and put to a national referendum, which by law can occur no earlier than 12 months after legislative approval. According to the Committee's terms of reference, the process is to be completed before the October 2014 midterm senatorial elections; however, the Committee has requested an extension. The

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United Nations is supporting the process, including with resource mobilization efforts.

4. Electoral reform efforts advanced, with the National Elections Commission beginning informal consultations with the legislature on a draft election law, which is expected, among other reforms, to clarify referendum procedures. Consultations were also held with political parties, civil society, religious and women's groups in 10 of the 15 counties of Liberia, and with a special working committee to integrate a gender perspective into the reform process.

5. In October, the Government initiated consultations in Monrovia on the National Reconciliation Road Map with civil society, political parties and legislators. Wider public consultations were not held as planned, reportedly owing to a lack of funds. In November, Nobel laureate Leymah Gbowee resigned as the head of the Liberia Reconciliation Initiative, citing her disappointment over what she described as pervasive corruption and nepotism. In December, President Johnson Sirleaf appointed George Weah of the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC), who had contested the 2005 and 2011 elections as the Standard-Bearer and Vice-Standard-Bearer for that party, as a peace ambassador overseeing national reconciliation efforts. Later that month, Mr. Weah named a 12-member committee to develop and manage his contribution to national reconciliation efforts.

6. The identification of a common forum through which political parties might contribute more directly to reform processes, including constitutional review and electoral reform, has remained elusive. Currently, there are two forums addressing these issues, the all-party Inter-Party Consultative Committee, which is led by the National Elections Commission but is limited to electoral reform issues, and the Political Consultative Forum, which is led by CDC but has only roughly half of the political parties in its membership. Efforts to merge the two forums failed following disagreements, including on whether the purpose of the Inter-Party Consultative Committee should be expanded beyond electoral matters to include other reform processes.

7. The fifty-third legislature went on its agricultural break in September after having enacted 22 bills and approved the 2012/13 national budget. The second session opened on 14 January 2013, with President Johnson Sirleaf delivering her state of the nation address on 28 January, in which she emphasized the Government's new and more transparent budget initiatives, including a three-year medium-term expenditure framework, and outlined expansive infrastructural and energy plans.

8. During the reporting period, relations between the legislature and the executive have at times been strained, with some opposition legislators threatening to commence an impeachment process against the President in January 2013. Some legislators also expressed concern that they had been insufficiently consulted on a number of executive-led processes, including Liberia Vision 2030 and the National Reconciliation Road Map. Challenges remain, despite dialogue facilitated by the National Traditional Council of Liberia and the Liberian Council of Churches in November.

9. One area of ongoing contention has been the role of the National Oil Company of Liberia in initiatives to reform the oil sector. The legislature, which launched its own reform, expressed reservations about a parallel executive-led reform process

dominated by the National Oil Company of Liberia, whose Chairman of the Board is the son of the President. The Senate held hearings on the General Audit Commission's dismissal of 46 staff members in November 2012, allegedly because of their engagement in a National Oil Company of Liberia audit. Meanwhile, the audit was suspended at the request of the Board of Companies. Amid public criticism in November 2012, some university students staged a peaceful protest demanding the resignation of the Auditor General and the reinstatement of the dismissed employees. Two deputies of the Auditor General also resigned in protest in December 2012.

10. On 17 January, the Senate received a communication from former President Charles Taylor requesting that the Government provide him with the financial benefits, amenities and diplomatic protections normally afforded to a former head of state. The request is under consideration. On 22 January, the Special Court for Sierra Leone began hearings into the appeal submitted by Mr. Taylor, who had been sentenced by the Court to 50 years in prison after being found guilty of aiding and abetting war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sierra Leone.

B. Security situation

11. The security situation in Liberia remains stable but fragile. During the reporting period, 31 mob violence incidents were reported, including 4 incidents of violence against national authorities and UNMIL. Armed robbery and violence against women and girls, including rape, continued to constitute primary security concerns. Almost half of the 211 reported armed robberies committed involved firearms. Sexual violence against women and girls remained high, with approximately 70 per cent of victims being minors and nearly 18 per cent being girls under the age of 10.

12. Tensions in several agricultural concession areas also continued to present security challenges. On 17 September, several armed individuals threatened the management and workers of Salala Rubber Corporation in Margibi County, claiming that local communities had not received promised compensation for land purchases. On 19 November, employees at the Sime Darby plantation in Bomi County gathered to protest the disappearance of a worker, for which they blamed the company. There were also confrontations between workers and management at Cavalla and Liberia Agriculture Corporation plantations, in Maryland and Grand Bassa counties, respectively.

13. Several generally peaceful demonstrations took place, in addition to three involving unrest. Many demonstrations involved public and private sector workers demanding salary arrears. The most prominent of those took place in Monrovia in September and October, when hundreds of students and teachers protested the non-payment of teachers' salaries. In September, 300 members of the opposition CDC party clashed with police in Monrovia over the alleged non-authorization of a march. Despite security concerns around a CDC commemoration of the 7 November 2011 events, in which one partisan had been shot dead in a clash with security forces, a peaceful environment prevailed. All of the demonstrations were addressed by national security agencies, with UNMIL advice and/or operational support, and no major incidents were reported.

14. On 22 November, a road traffic accident involving UNMIL personnel, and resulting in two deaths, prompted mob violence in Margibi County and the burning of a United Nations vehicle. On 12 December, a disturbance involving more than 100 people on the Monrovia-Gbarnga highway erupted after an Armed Forces of Liberia soldier stabbed a motorcycle taxi driver. Liberian police personnel, together with UNMIL military and police, responded to the scene in both incidents.

C. Regional issues

15. The situation along the border of Liberia with Côte d'Ivoire improved, with only one cross-border attack taking place during the reporting period, as indicated in my December 2012 report on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) (S/2012/964). However, persistent reports of armed elements operating along the border and rumours of imminent attacks continued, contributing to an influx into Liberia of approximately 1,800 Ivorian refugees in September following the 13 August Péhékanhouébli attack in Côte d'Ivoire.

16. The Governments of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire continued to strengthen their bilateral approach to addressing border security. During a meeting in Abidjan in October 2012, President Johnson Sirleaf and President Ouattara agreed to conduct joint border security operations and to reactivate the 1972 Joint Commission on Ivorian-Liberian Cooperation, which provides a framework for cooperation in economic, political, judicial, social and cultural spheres through periodic meetings. Between 23 December and 3 January, the Armed Forces of Liberia and the Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire conducted joint riverine patrols along the Cavalla River.

17. Meanwhile, Operation Restore Hope, which involves the Emergency Response Unit of the Liberia National Police, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization and the armed forces, has been extended for at least an additional 90 days. This is the third extension since the Government launched the border operation in June 2012. The operation mitigated security threats and contributed to the arrest of 30 suspected armed elements and the recovery of 7 arms caches during the period under review.

18. On 15 October, the national police arrested a prominent "general" from one of Liberia's former warring factions in Ganta, Nimba County. He and an associate were subsequently arraigned in Monrovia for allegedly recruiting fighters for actions in Côte d'Ivoire. On 2 November, Liberian security forces discovered an arms cache in Grand Gedeh County containing three weapons that have since been confirmed as belonging to the UNOCI peacekeepers killed in western Côte d'Ivoire on 8 June 2012. In the context of bilateral agreements, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire requested the Government of Liberia, in December, to extradite eight Ivorian refugees registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The refugees are under detention in Liberia on charges connected to the 8 June 2012 attack. An extradition hearing began in Monrovia on 24 January.

19. As mentioned in my last report, UNMIL and UNOCI have enhanced their cooperation, including by revitalizing Operation Mayo, the twice-monthly concurrent border patrols that are followed by meetings with the military and civilian components of both missions, Liberian and Ivorian security personnel, local

officials and community leaders. These meetings allow for information-sharing, help dispel rumours and facilitate shared responsibility for border security. UNMIL conducted aerial and air-inserted foot border patrols, including simultaneous aerial patrols with UNOCI, in addition to three separate cross-border air patrols at the request of UNOCI. The two missions continued to improve information-sharing and coordination of actions, as well as collaboration on issues related to small arms and light weapons. In response to Security Council resolution 2066 (2012), in which the Council called on UNMIL and UNOCI to enhance their inter-mission cooperation for the stabilization of the border area, UNMIL is establishing a regional/inter-mission cooperation capacity to reinforce efforts to deliver on this mandated task.

20. Cooperation has also expanded beyond security tasks and the sharing of resources, with UNMIL and UNOCI agreeing in September to identify targeted, longer-term initiatives to enhance stability in border areas, such as the promotion of conditions for sustainable return and reintegration of displaced persons. Among the areas of focus, which would involve the entire United Nations family in both countries, are food security, alternative livelihoods, land disputes, social cohesion and reconciliation, youth employment, community violence reduction and disarmament. Along these lines, funding is being sought for a three-year pilot cross-border action plan on food security, nutrition and social cohesion, which is expected to be launched in early 2013.

21. The situation along the borders of Liberia with Guinea and Sierra Leone remained generally stable. During the elections in Sierra Leone in November 2012, Liberian security agencies established security coordination mechanisms to avert any spillover of unrest, in coordination with UNMIL and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL). As contingency measures during the electoral period, UNMIL deployed a military helicopter to Freetown and increased air and foot patrols in the context of Operation Loko, conducted jointly by UNMIL and Liberian and Sierra Leonean security agencies. Operation Seskin, involving joint patrolling of the Liberia-Guinea border by UNMIL and Liberian and Guinean security agencies, also continued.

D. Humanitarian situation

22. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its partners, including the Government, continued a verification and biometric registration exercise. As at 18 February, 64,168 Ivorian refugees had been registered in Liberia. While this represents an increase of over 6,100 since my last report, arrivals declined sharply from October onwards, and some 2,176 refugees returned to Côte d'Ivoire in January alone. UNHCR estimates that approximately 16,000 refugees will return to Côte d'Ivoire in 2013. Notwithstanding the Government's policy of relocating refugees into camps, approximately 42 per cent of Ivorian refugees remained in some 200 host communities at the end of 2012. These communities are difficult to access and offer limited livelihood opportunities.

23. The Government also continued its efforts to consolidate refugee camps to streamline the delivery of services, protection and assistance. Dougee camp in Grand Gedeh County is scheduled to close by March 2013 and its 5,700 inhabitants are to be relocated to either the camp in Grand Gedeh County on land formerly

owned by Prime Timber Production Company (PTP camp) or Little Wlebo camp in Maryland County. The Government has also taken steps to maintain the civilian nature of asylum, including by deploying police units to camps. However, as indicated in paragraph 15 above, rumours about cross-border instability persist, and the security of refugees remains a concern.

24. In 2012, only 38 per cent of the $97 million consolidated humanitarian appeal was funded. In lieu of a consolidated appeal for 2013, the United Nations country team has developed a humanitarian response plan, requiring $36 million in funding, to address critical needs in seven counties.

25. Meanwhile, the Government of Liberia, with support from UNMIL, worked to develop county-specific preparedness plans for disaster response and to identify risks in the mining and forestry sectors. As a result of these efforts, draft legislation to establish a national disaster management agency was prepared, which is under review by the legislature.

E. Human rights situation

26. The Independent National Commission on Human Rights made progress in overcoming its persistent organizational challenges. The Commission continued to work with civil society and ministries to develop the national human rights action plan, which is expected to be validated by the Government later this year. In August, following the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Steering Committee of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights and the National Commission on Disabilities initiated efforts to develop strategies to implement the Convention. In December, the Independent National Commission on Human Rights initiated a campaign against child sexual abuse, in collaboration with State and civil society actors.

27. The implementation of Government guidelines regulating the traditional practices of the Sande and Poro secret societies, which impede children from attending school in some areas, began during the reporting period. In order to improve the enrolment of girls in school traditional leaders in Grand Cape Mount County agreed not to conduct Sande society activities during the formal education period.

28. In November, the communities of Samay and Kpolopala in Bong County dedicated a memorial to those killed during the conflict, including some 500 victims whose remains were exhumed and reburied in 2009, marking Liberia's first memorialization of this kind.

F. Economic situation

29. As part of the efforts related to the Millennium Development Goals and post-2015 planning, I appointed President Johnson Sirleaf as one of three co-chairs of a high-level panel mandated to provide a vision for a new global post-2015 development agenda. The panel met in Monrovia from 30 January to 1 February to undertake consultations with various stakeholders on the factors that would lead to a structural transformation through an agreed agenda.

30. The Liberian economy continued to grow steadily, owing to higher demand for its export commodities and increased foreign direct investment. Real gross domestic product is projected to grow by 9.3 per cent in 2012, up from 8.7 in 2011, bolstered by rubber, timber and iron ore exports, increased concession activity and expansion of the construction sector. The mining sector's contribution to growth increased from 3.7 per cent in 2011 to 10.4 per cent in 2012, primarily as a result of the expansion in the production of iron ore. However, owing to limited employment opportunities in the mining sector and the continued underperformance of the agricultural sector, unemployment remains extremely high, particularly among young people. Meanwhile, inflation was expected to fall to 5.2 per cent in 2012, down from 8.5 per cent in 2011, but Liberia remains vulnerable to increases in international food and fuel prices, as the country is still heavily dependent on imports, which could affect the inflation rate.

III. Development of national security and justice capacities

A. Transition planning and implementation

31. Following the successful joint Government-UNMIL transition workshop in August 2012, the activities of the Government-UNMIL joint transition working group increased in momentum and shifted from planning towards implementation. From October to December, several small facilities were handed over to the Government, as UNMIL military scaled down in more stable areas. However, in January a company-sized location at Foya, Lofa County, was transferred to the Ministry of Internal Affairs rather than to police and immigration officials, as resources were not available to support the deployment of police and immigration personnel, illustrating national constraints in planning capacity, equipment, financial resources and management. Poor infrastructure, particularly roads, also poses a major challenge to national security agencies, a concern that will grow as UNMIL military enablers are drawn down.

32. UNMIL and the Government of Liberia have developed a transition road map, with comprehensive timelines, outlining all elements related to the security transition through June 2015, including enhanced Government presence, as required, in areas vacated by UNMIL troops. Lessons are being drawn from the Mission's ongoing first drawdown phase, which will inform planning for larger withdrawals throughout 2013 and 2014. The implementation of those reductions will take place in a phased manner, and the situation will be kept under close review.

33. A meeting of the Transition Core Group in December 2012, expanded to include all heads of security agencies, identified the need for greater coordination between security stakeholders and the Ministry of Finance to address immediate shortfalls in resources over the next six months. To that end, the working group is developing a budget gap analysis to be discussed at a retreat in March 2013. At the retreat the working group will update the costing of the transition, which in 2010 was estimated at approximately $70 million for the first year, with a subsequent annual cost of approximately $30 million.

B. National security strategy and architecture

34. As I indicated in my last report, the national budget for the 2012/13 fiscal year was initially submitted with reductions for the security sector components, notwithstanding an overall increase due to higher allocations for the national army. The budget was subsequently amended in August 2012 and signed into law by the President in September. Compared with the 2011/12 national budget, allocations for the national police increased by 29 per cent, while allocations for the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization increased by 69 per cent. The national army also received an increased allocation of 22 per cent, as compared with the previous budget. In spite of those increases, the security agencies continue to face operational challenges owing to difficulties in accessing allocated funds.

35. Enhancement of oversight and accountability within the security sector remains critical for reform. The Peacebuilding Fund has allocated resources to support a review of management and accountability mechanisms within the national police, the Ministry of Justice and the judiciary. In addition, the Ministry of Justice, with support from UNMIL, is developing a civilian complaints mechanism, as well as an independent civilian oversight body, initially for the police. The Ministry of Justice established a technical working group to support those initiatives and to develop a new police law. In addition to addressing issues such as the optimal size and structure for the police, including the integration of the National Bureau of Investigation into the national police structure, the new law should provide clarity on important coordination issues, including relations with the national army, as set out in generic terms in the 2008 National Defence Act.

36. The United Nations Gender Thematic Group established a mechanism to coordinate gender and security sector activities on a quarterly basis, including developing a basic module on gender and security sector reform for national security agencies. While efforts to mainstream human rights in the security sector continue, with an emphasis on greater human rights monitoring and accountability within the national police, the Bureau of Immigration and Nationalization and the national army, eight cases involving abuse by security sector personnel were reported. Although the police have investigated the incidents, no disciplinary action has been taken to date against the officers involved.

37. In August 2012, the legislature enacted a law creating the Liberia National Commission on Small Arms, which will be responsible for developing and implementing arms control measures. Financial resources have yet to be allocated to the Commission, and commissioners have not yet been appointed. In October, Executive Order No. 34, which temporarily banned ownership of firearms, expired. A draft firearms control bill that would update obsolete legislation is pending in the legislature.

C. National police

38. The Government of Liberia and its partners have acknowledged that, notwithstanding the need for additional police personnel, addressing issues such as the quality of training, professional standards, accountability, public trust and sustainability is central to the ability of the police to perform their duties. As indicated in paragraph 35 above, the new police law under development is expected

to clarify the functions and structure of the police and its relationship with other security agencies, and to address issues critical to the professionalization of the police service, such as recruitment and promotion.

39. The national police, with support from UNMIL, made efforts to improve civilian oversight to help professionalize the service and enhance public trust. The Professional Standards Department, which investigates reports of officer misconduct, has established a database to monitor misconduct cases and is taking measures to improve confidentiality. During the reporting period, the national police held over 600 community police meetings across the country, including 30 outreach programmes involving schools. The public has displayed an increased willingness to participate in community police meetings and to provide information contributing to the prevention of crime and arrests.

40. As at 1 February, the strength of the national police stood at 4,417 personnel, including 767 women, of whom 36 were in leadership positions. A total of 245 recruits graduated from the police academy in 2012, including 48 women. Training of an additional 303 recruits was delayed until mid-February due to lack of funding. Another 300 will be trained later in the year in line with the academy's expanded capacity to accommodate 600 recruits per year.

41. During the reporting period, 13 projects to support implementation of the national police strategic plan were completed. They focused on improving operational efficiency, investigative and training capacity, and administrative accountability. The national police also established project review committees that met weekly. In December 2012, the police forensic science laboratory began to use ballistic examination equipment and initiated training on the use of the equipment, which will help to assemble credible evidence in criminal cases in which firearms are involved.

42. The Transnational Crime Unit continues gradually to develop its capacity and to benefit from its collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. During the reporting period, the Unit successfully investigated alleged drug trafficking, human trafficking and money-laundering. Several Transnational Crime Unit and International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) officers underwent training in drug identification and trafficking, weapons smuggling and transnational and organized crimes investigations and operations.

D. Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization

43. The comprehensive reform of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization began in February 2012. Since that time, the agency has undertaken the vetting, recruitment and training of 250 recruits. Although the total number of Bureau personnel stands at over 1,800, many of them will be deactivated in the course of the vetting and training processes.

44. The Bureau made progress in implementing its strategic plan, with the establishment of a strategic project review board. A number of initiatives, including the development of a duty manual, a code of conduct and assets management policies have been approved by the Ministry of Justice. A revised ranking structure is still awaiting approval. Capacity-building of the Bureau also continued, with immigration officers receiving specialized training in a range of areas, including

human trafficking, document fraud detection, and basic intelligence and investigation.

45. Donor support for the Bureau, which is critical in view of its important role in securing the country's borders, has been increasing, and has included computer equipment, funding for a document fraud detection unit and support for drafting a migration policy. Infrastructure at five border posts was completed during the last six months with funding support from UNMIL quick-impact projects. In November 2012, the Government of Liberia allocated land for a new headquarters for the Bureau, and is seeking donor support for its construction.

E. Judicial, legal and corrections institutions

46. Coordination within the justice and security sectors continued to improve. The collaborative approach employed during the first year of implementation of the Justice and Security Joint Programme and the leadership of its oversight body, the Justice and Security Board, which brings together the judiciary, the Ministry of Justice, civil society, donors and United Nations actors, has greatly contributed in this regard.

47. A number of initiatives to improve access to justice for Liberians continue to make progress. The pilot justice and security hub in Gbarnga, which is supported by the Peacebuilding Fund, is becoming operational, with the extension of both the Probation Service and the Sexual and Gender-Based Violent Crimes Unit to the region. Civic education activities to inform communities about the hub are also ongoing through the Public Service Office. One human rights monitor, two prosecutors and two public defenders each have been deployed to Bong, Lofa and Nimba counties. Twenty corrections officers, to be deployed to facilities within the region, have commenced induction training and the hub training facility has begun to provide training for justice and security personnel. The hub is expected to be fully operational in the second quarter of 2013. It will take approximately six months before an initial assessment of its impact can be made. Meanwhile, discussions are under way concerning the development of the second and third justice and security hubs, taking into account lessons learned in establishing the pilot hub.

48. During the period under review, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Internal Affairs continued work towards developing policy options for harmonizing the customary and formal justice systems, which is critical for improved access to justice. Broad-based consultations, including with civil society, are planned for early 2013. In September, access to justice was the theme of the Open Day on Women, Peace and Security, during which more than 70 women from across Liberia presented their recommendations for enhancing access to justice. Effective investigation and prosecution of sexual and gender-based violence cases remain problematic, and out-of-court settlements are prevalent. In October, the Ministries of Gender and Justice, in collaboration with the United Nations, convened a workshop that developed recommendations for addressing child rape that are being implemented under the Government-United Nations Joint Programme on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

49. The criminal justice system continued to face systemic problems that contributed to the denial of justice to victims and alleged perpetrators. Those accused of crimes rarely face trial, and pretrial detention in the nation's prisons

remains at approximately 80 per cent. The judiciary and the Ministry of Justice have initiated procedures for the regular review of detention cases, and it is hoped that draft legislation developed to address delays within the system by amending the jury law and expanding the jurisdiction of magisterial courts will be signed into law in early 2013.

50. Persistently elevated rates of pretrial detention generated frustration and security challenges within corrections facilities, including at Monrovia Central Prison, which holds approximately half of the prison population of Liberia. Since 1 August, 13 jailbreaks have occurred around the country. Inadequate staffing at the Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation remains a problem. Sixty-nine corrections officers were trained in the use of non-lethal force during the period under review. Some steps have also been taken towards improving the health and nutrition of the incarcerated population. In September, the Ministry of Health, with the International Committee of the Red Cross, organized a workshop for prison superintendents focused on the management of prisoner nutrition and the standardization of health care. Two new health clinics were established at Tubmanburg and Zwedru Prisons in December and January, respectively, with support from UNMIL quick-impact projects. Preparations also continued for the construction of a new prison in Montserrado County.

F. Armed forces

51. At an extraordinary summit of Heads of State of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in January, President Johnson Sirleaf pledged a platoon of Liberian troops for the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), which the legislature subsequently endorsed.

52. As indicated in paragraph 17 above, the armed forces continued to participate in the joint border security initiative, Operation Restore Hope, along the border of Liberia with Côte d'Ivoire. This first-ever deployment provided an indication of the army's potential, although logistical and other support deficiencies exist. Additional training and support is also required to overcome challenges with respect to strategic and operational planning and decision-making. A draft of the national defence strategy has been developed and is expected to be approved in February 2013, and the armed forces are expected to become fully operational by 2014.

IV. Extension of State authority throughout the country

A. State authority

53. The extension of State authority and the Government's capacity to deliver basic services have improved, although challenges persist in addressing infrastructure needs, and the capacity of local government officials to administer effectively remains limited. In the national budget $3 million has been allocated for county development funds ($200,000 each), to be accessed by county councils. Efforts to empower county officials continue, with the Ministry of Internal Affairs focusing on building mechanisms for local economic development and responsive governance through regular training and workshops for officials. Meanwhile, transparency and accountability mechanisms are being put in place to encourage the

effective management of funds by local bodies, such as county councils (the highest county-level decision-making body for each development fund), county development management committees and project management teams.

54. In October, the Government unveiled a five-year $50 million draft decentralization implementation plan (2012-2017), including a three-year de-concentration implementation strategy (2012-2015), which aims to transfer some functions of 12 line ministries and 2 agencies to the counties, in addition to investing $23 million directly in county office structures. Despite initial commitments valued at $17.4 million from donors, a funding gap of nearly $32.6 million remains. A draft local government act, the legal and regulatory framework for implementing the national decentralization and local governance policy, is under review by stakeholders, including line ministries, donors, the United Nations country team and others. However, its passage alone will be insufficient for implementation of decentralization measures; constitutional amendments would also be required.

55. Efforts were made to expand road rehabilitation; however, the already poor access to significant parts of the country deteriorated further as a result of the prolonged rainy season. This, in turn, contributed to a significant increase in the price of rice and fuel in some isolated rural areas. In November, the Ministry of Public Works initiated its dry season road infrastructure programme, and the Government released $15 million for emergency road repairs. Donors have increased support to the infrastructure sector through the World Bank-managed Liberia Reconstruction Trust Fund, committing some $175 million for primary road rehabilitation.

B. Governance

56. The issue of corruption and public integrity remained a central feature of public discourse. Progress in combating corruption remains slow. Since 2010, the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission has submitted 24 cases for prosecution to the Ministry of Justice. The first conviction was handed down in November 2012, and is being appealed. In August 2012, the President took steps to enforce Executive Order No. 38, by which an administrative code of conduct was established. Those steps included suspending ministers and other officials pending their compliance with asset declaration rules. The Government has not taken action on recommendations from audits of public institutions, and the code of conduct for the civil service has yet to be passed by the legislature.

C. Natural resources

57. During the period under review, considerable media and civil society attention focused on lack of transparency in the awarding of private use permits for the commercial exploitation of 2 million hectares of forest. In August 2012, the President commissioned a special independent investigative body to conduct a review of private use permits. Based on its recommendations, the President subsequently requested a review of the legal and regulatory framework governing the management of community forest areas and private use permits, as well as the prosecution of violators of the National Forestry Reform Law and the Community

Rights Law. The President also dissolved the Board of Directors of the Forest Development Authority and ordered a full audit of the agency. On 4 January, the President issued Executive Order No. 44, suspending the issuance of private use permits and any activity related to timber felling or exporting under such licences, reinforcing the moratorium that the Forestry Development Authority had established in February 2012. Meanwhile, tax arrears owed by commercial timber operators have grown to $34.7 million.

58. Confrontations continue between local communities and rubber and oil palm plantations over the manner in which land is appropriated to develop and/or expand concession areas. Many of these disputes stem from concession procurement, which relies on an undefined land tenure system that considers all untitled land to be publicly owned. This means that the State can assert eminent domain without seeking the consent of affected communities. In August, the Government, with funding from the African Development Bank, launched a review of five agriculture agreements, with the aim of converting them from their existing land leases into full concession agreements in line with international model lease agreements. In addition, in December, the Liberia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative commissioned a process audit of the four concessions awarded by the Government between 2009 and 2011.

59. All concession agreements contain provisions for tripartite mechanisms, including for conflict resolution, which if implemented, would enable effective Government oversight. However, while the Government should take the lead in mediating confrontations that arise when companies begin to demarcate, establish and expand concession areas, this task is increasingly falling on civil society and non-governmental organizations, which have been successful in bringing grievances to national and international attention. In Gbarpolu, Grand Cape Mount and Bomi counties (Sime Darby), Grand Bassa County (Equatorial Palm Oil) and Maryland and River Gee counties (Maryland Oil Palm Plantation), communities and companies have made efforts to negotiate with one another directly, with UNMIL supporting dialogue in each county.

60. Nationwide consultations with civil society organizations and women and youth groups are taking place on a draft land rights policy that would cover four land tenure categories — public, government, customary and private — and address security of tenure, equal access and equal benefits for all categories of land users. It is expected to form the basis for a new land rights law and serve as the foundation for reform of the land sector. The Land Commission, with support from the Peacebuilding Fund, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and other partners, supported the establishment of land coordination centres in five counties. The first centre, in Lofa County, began providing dispute resolution services and taking complaints in January.

61. In 2012, a total of 34,018.96 carats of rough diamonds, valued at $12.49 million, was exported, providing $0.37 million in Government revenue. Compliance with the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme remains constrained, however, owing to a lack of resources and the absence of effective State authority in production regions. Capacity gaps in regional government diamond offices hindered the ability of the authorities to monitor and control the movement of diamonds out of counties. A technical committee of the Presidential Task Force on Diamonds met regularly to address outstanding recommendations for strengthening the sector and

to prepare for a Kimberley Process Certification Scheme review mission in March. In November, public consultations to revise the existing Mining and Mineral Law of 2000 began.

V. Cross-cutting issues

A. Integration of the United Nations system

62. The United Nations in Liberia continued to strengthen its efforts at "Delivering as one" by finalizing the "One programme", which is the successor to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. The programme includes four pillars, which are aligned with the Government's Agenda for Transformation pillar structure. The pillars are: peace, security and rule of law; sustainable economic transformation; human development; and governance and public institutions. Under the pillars are 11 outcome working groups, which are the technical programming drivers. The programme also has a costed action plan. To further harmonize programming and operations, the United Nations country team developed joint workplans for 2013, including resource allocations within the parameters of "One budget".

63. Progress was also made in change management, with the United Nations system implementing a shared information and communications technology platform and working to launch common processes on procurement, administration and human resources.

B. Public information

64. In January, the President publicly committed her administration to protecting freedom of the press. However, national legislation has not yet been amended to bring the law in line with the Declaration of Table Mountain on press freedom in Africa, which the President signed in July 2012.

65. UNMIL is working with the Government of Liberia on assuaging uncertainties and managing public expectations over the drawdown of UNMIL troops and the handover of security responsibilities to national authorities. A working group on communications has been established within the joint Government-UNMIL working group focused on transition. A broad transition communications strategy is also being developed in consultation with the United Nations country team and Government partners.

66. In November, UNMIL Radio began carrying UNOCI Radio programming in French on Ivorian reconciliation initiatives for the benefit of Ivorian refugees in border counties in Liberia. In the period leading up to the November 2012 elections in Sierra Leone, UNMIL Radio broadcast weekly interviews with Sierra Leonean election officials and aired these in Liberian communities along the border with Sierra Leone.

C. Gender

67. UNMIL continued to mainstream gender issues in its work, including training its personnel on implementing mandates on women, peace and security. In addition, the United Nations and the Ministry of Gender and Development continued to coordinate gender-related activities, including strengthening mechanisms to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and strengthening the Ministry's capacity in the counties.

68. In November 2012, UNMIL and the United Nations Office for West Africa convened representatives from women's civil society organizations from 10 West African countries, ECOWAS, the Mano River Union and the United Nations to discuss women's leadership during peacekeeping transitions. Among the recommendations was a call for enhanced local ownership of the transition agenda and deepened cooperation with regional organizations.

D. HIV/AIDS

69. In line with Security Council resolution 1983 (2011) on the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in conflict and post-conflict situations, UNMIL, with support from the Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), trained 20 HIV-awareness trainers from Liberian security sector agencies. UNMIL also conducted HIV-awareness training for 1,611 newly deployed peacekeepers.

E. Conduct and discipline

70. UNMIL continued its efforts to prevent misconduct through induction and refresher training for all categories of personnel and sensitization programmes for local communities in proximity to United Nations installations. Spot checks of off-limits establishments and risk assessment visits to military installations were among the measures taken to ensure compliance with my policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse. Partnerships have been strengthened to raise awareness about the United Nations victim assistance mechanism. Between 1 August 2012 and 18 February 2013, nine allegations of serious misconduct by peacekeepers were reported, including one allegation of sexual exploitation and abuse.

F. Security and safety of United Nations personnel

71. Criminal activity and road traffic accidents were the primary threats to United Nations personnel and assets, especially in Monrovia. Between 1 August 2012 and 1 February 2013, two United Nations personnel were the targets of armed robbery. In addition, 28 non-weapon-related crimes, including burglary, theft and assault, were reported. There were 11 cases of arrest and detention of United Nations personnel. During the period under review, two international staff members, one national staff member and two military personnel died as a result of illness or accident.

VI. Deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia

A. Military component

72. The authorized military strength of UNMIL in September stood at 7,952 personnel, including a force headquarters in Monrovia, six infantry battalions deployed in two sectors, a battalion-sized quick reaction force based in Monrovia and two forward operating bases near routes to the borders with Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.

73. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2066 (2012), the UNMIL force began the next stage of its drawdown. By 18 February, 1,130 troops had been repatriated from Liberia, including an infantry battalion (770 troops), an engineering company (260 troops) and a signals company (100 troops). The military strength of UNMIL as at 18 February 2013 stood at 6,822 military personnel, including 183 women. The UNMIL force has now left Rivercess County, Robertsport in Grand Cape Mount County and Foya in Lofa County.

74. UNMIL and UNOCI continued to support each other through inter-mission cooperation arrangements and closely coordinated border activities, as detailed in paragraph 19 above. The two missions also continued preparations to put into effect the provisions of resolution 2062 (2012) authorizing the transfer of three armed helicopters deployed in Liberia to Côte d'Ivoire to be used in both countries and along and across the border. In January 2012, the concerned troop-contributing country approved the transfer, which is expected to take place later this year.

B. Police component

75. As at 18 February, UNMIL had 1,340 police personnel, out of an authorized ceiling of 1,795, including 498 police advisers (16 of whom are immigration advisers), 1,265 personnel in 10 formed police units and 32 corrections officers. There are 186 women in the police component. Three of the 10 formed police units were newly authorized by the Security Council in resolution 2066 (2012). In keeping with that resolution, the advance team for the first of the three additional formed police units deployed to Liberia in January 2013. That unit, which will be based in Bomi County, is expected to become operational in February 2013. In addition, UNMIL has three formed police units deployed in Monrovia, and one unit each in Bong, Grand Bassa, Grand Gedeh and Lofa counties.

C. Civilian component

76. Of the authorized staffing of 1,817 civilian personnel, 1,664 were serving in the Mission as at 1 February, of whom 24 per cent were women. Of the 500 substantive staff, 26 per cent were women, while 23 per cent of the 1,164 administrative staff were women.

VII. Observations

77. Liberia continues to make important strides in consolidating its hard-won peace and stability. I salute the aspirations of the people of Liberia to engage in the challenging work required to overcome the deep-seated cleavages of the past and to

build a future based on equal access to political, social and economic opportunities. This commitment to addressing the issues that continue to divide Liberians will help to ensure that the country remains on the path to positive transformation.

78. I welcome the launch of Liberia Vision 2030, which charts a path to achieving social cohesion and socioeconomic development over the next two decades. Liberia's five-year development plan, the Agenda for Transformation, offers an important opportunity to build on the country's impressive post-war recovery, and I encourage partners to support it. I hope to see wide engagement on the National Reconciliation Road Map, which opens the door to a structured discussion on cleavages of the past and present and to finding a constructive path to address the challenges that affect every Liberian. At the same time, it will be important that all Liberians, particularly those in public office, do their part to help deliver on these far-reaching promises.

79. It remains critical for Liberia, with the support of its partners, to continue to address the issues that will pave the way for the country's long-term progress. In order to take root, all reform processes must reflect the will of the people and include their active participation. I therefore welcome the vibrant and sometimes discordant, but constructive, dialogue under way on issues that go to the heart of sustainable peace, including constitutional reform, decentralization and national reconciliation.

80. In addition to its efforts to advance national reconciliation, Liberia has initiated an important process of constitutional reform. I am encouraged by those steps, which will strengthen the foundations of the country's long-term stability. The Constitution Review Committee has begun to engage widely on the consultative process to be followed, as well as on the substantive content to be addressed, including whether to pursue limited amendments or a broader revision of the Constitution. Constitutional reform presents the opportunity to institutionalize important aspects of Liberia's post-conflict reform agenda, including the decentralization of Government functions, which is expected not only to improve access to basic services but also to increase citizens' engagement in the political sphere.

81. Long-term stability will also require that Liberia's security sector is able to stand alone and is trusted by its citizens. In order to ensure its professionalism, the security sector will require effective oversight and accountability mechanisms, adherence to democratic principles and respect for human rights. The successful operations of security agencies, including in border areas, are an indication of increased capability. UNMIL will continue to support the Government in its efforts to increase the size and professionalism of its police and other security services. However, it will also be vital that the Government continue to demonstrate its own commitment by allocating sufficient resources to cover operational, recurrent and development costs. Given the importance of border security, it is encouraging that budget allocations for the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization have increased and that there is progress in the vetting and training of its personnel.

82. I am encouraged by the progress made by the Government and UNMIL in advancing the security transition process, which has now moved into the implementation stage. Commendable efforts have been made by Liberian stakeholders, with UNMIL support, to overcome the operational challenges the Government faces in deploying police and immigration officers to areas of the country where UNMIL military has been withdrawn. The United Nations will continue to keep the situation under close review. In the meantime, it will be critical

for the Government to allocate sufficient resources to this process and for the security services to align their deployment plans and training schedules with the pace of the transition. Coordination among the various mechanisms supporting transition and development of the justice and security sectors is also essential.

83. Important efforts have been made by the Liberian and Ivorian authorities to enhance security along their shared border. Liberia has shown commitment to do its part, including through the continued deployment of Operation Restore Hope. UNMIL has also enhanced its efforts, in collaboration with UNOCI, to support Government efforts. The situation remains fragile and will continue to pose risks until underlying issues are addressed. Communities on both sides of the border will need to grapple with a host of challenges that go to the root of instability, including land tenure issues, ethnic tensions, socioeconomic vulnerability, activities linked to illicit resource exploitation, the availability of weapons and the presence of former fighters and mercenaries. The consolidation of peace will therefore depend on a comprehensive, long-term strategy for addressing those and other underlying issues. It is important that the two Governments continue to take forward their discussions on the development of a shared border strategy.

84. The continued stability of Liberia depends in significant part on good governance and the rule of law. Improving the criminal justice system, addressing impunity for crimes and increasing access to justice and security services for all Liberians remain particularly important for the consolidation of peace. In this regard, I welcome the progress that has been made to operationalize the justice and security hub in Gbarnga. I also note that preparatory work is under way for the construction of the second and third hubs, and I urge that the lessons from the Gbarnga experience be used to inform these forthcoming projects.

85. In previous reports, I have highlighted the challenge of continued impunity for crimes and for human rights violations. I am encouraged that recent cases of mob violence have resulted in arrests. It will be important that these cases move expeditiously through the court system. Notwithstanding important progress made in strengthening response mechanisms and the reporting of crimes of sexual and gender-based violence, the prosecution of these cases remains a challenge, owing to weak institutional capacity and the high cost, both financially and socially, for the victims and their families. Efforts for prevention require much greater attention, both from the Government and international partners.

86. Land is critical in Liberia, both as a potential source of conflict and an opportunity for improved livelihoods. At the same time, in the light of recurrent disputes, notably over land, local mechanisms for alternative dispute resolution and local peace committees have an important role to play. I strongly encourage the Government to establish functional dispute resolution mechanisms to address specific conflicts between concessionaires and communities.

87. In conclusion, I wish to thank my Special Representative for Liberia, Karin Landgren, as well as all UNMIL civilian and uniformed personnel for their contribution towards peace consolidation in Liberia. I would also like to thank all troop- and police-contributing countries, ECOWAS and regional organizations, multilateral and bilateral donors, the Peacebuilding Commission, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and Liberian and international non-governmental organizations for their contributions to sustaining peace and development in Liberia.

Annex

United Nations Mission in Liberia: military and police strength as at 18 February 2013

Country	Military component				Formed police units	Civilian police
	Military observers	Staff officers	Troops	Total		
Argentina	–	–	–	–		12
Bangladesh	13	7	1 379	1 39		9
Benin	2	1	–	3		–
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	2	1	–	3		–
Bosnia and Herzegovina	–	–	–	–		10
Brazil	2	1	–	3		–
Bulgaria	2	–	–	2		–
China	2	6	558	566		18
Croatia	–	2	–	2		–
Czech Republic	–	–	–	–		–
Denmark	3	2	–	5		–
Ecuador	2	1	–	3		–
Egypt	7	–	–	7		5
El Salvador	2	–	–	2		2
Ethiopia	10	4	–	14		–
Fiji	–	–	–	–		31
Finland	–	2	–	2		–
France	–	1	–	1		–
Gambia	2	–	–	2		18
Germany	–	–	–	–		5
Ghana	9	7	700	716		27
India	–	–	–	–	255	5
Indonesia	1	–	–	1		–
Jamaica	–	–	–	–		–
Jordan	4	5	116	125	239	16
Kenya	–	2	–	2		23
Kyrgyzstan	3	–	–	3		4
Malaysia	5	–	–	5		–
Mali	–	–	–	–		–
Mongolia	–	–	–	–		–
Montenegro	2	–	–	2		–
Namibia	1	3	–	4		3
Nepal	4	3	15	22	256	15
Niger	2	–	–	2		–
Nigeria	13	9	1 459	1 481	120	14

Country	Military component				Formed police units	Civilian police
	Military observers	Staff officers	Troops	Total		
Norway	–	–	–	–		9
Pakistan	7	9	1 990	2 006		14
Paraguay	2	1	–	3		–
Peru	2	2	–	4		–
Philippines	2	1	115	118		34
Poland	1	–	–	1		2
Republic of Korea	1	1	–	2		–
Republic of Moldova	2	–	–	2		–
Romania	2	–	–	2		–
Russian Federation	4	–	–	4		9
Rwanda	–	–	–	–		8
Samoa	–	–	–	–		–
Senegal	1	2	–	3		–
Serbia	4	–	–	4		6
Sri Lanka	–	–	–	–		14
Sweden	–	–	–	–		19
Switzerland	–	–	–	–		3
Togo	2	1	–	3		–
Turkey	–	–	–	–		28
Uganda	–	–	–	–		14
Ukraine	2	2	275	279		19
United States of America	4	6	–	10		15
Uruguay	–	–	–	–		4
Yemen	–	1	–	1		5
Zambia	2	–	–	2		19
Zimbabwe	1	–	–	1		31
Total	**132**	**83**	**6 607**	**6 822**	**870**	**470**